

Discussion Points: An Inventory of Family Engagement

Directions: Complete with input from teachers, parents, administrators.

	Well Implemented	A Good Start	Needs Improvement
PRECONDITIONS: ATTITUDES			
Efforts are made to recruit a culturally and linguistically diverse staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff are open to diversity and welcoming to all cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff view parents as equals and understand the importance of the parent's role in educating children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff understand that parents' attitudes about school affect their children's attitudes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff are able to identify strengths in each family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff use information gained from parents to inform classroom practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program philosophy statement references partnership with parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff and administrators value shared decision-making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development is available to staff on diversity-related topics and on how to foster a family-centered program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PRECONDITIONS: A WELCOMING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT			
Staff acknowledge the presence of parents and all visitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers personally invite parents to visit the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers know and use the parent's names.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff initiate partnership with each child's family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Special effort is made to reach uninvolved parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special efforts are made to transition families into the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conferences are scheduled at times convenient for parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language translators are available as needed • Child care is provided 			
Parents are invited to join their child for meals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The building and classroom arrangements reflect the children's ethnicity, family culture/traditions, children's needs and their educational accomplishments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos from home are on display in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child initiated work is on display in the classroom, in the hallway, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PARTNERING FOR SUPPORTIVE HOME ENVIRONMENTS

We sponsor parent education workshops and other trainings for parents on topics requested by parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide families with information on child development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We conduct family support programs with parent-to-parent discussion groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide families with information on developing home conditions that support learning:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient sleep • Nutritious food • Limited TV • Family meals • Consistent family routine • Responsive adults 			
We lend families books or tapes on parenting or videotapes of parent workshops.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We ask families about children's strengths and interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We join with families to generate developmental goals for their child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We develop individual and positive relationships with families; learning about families and helping families understand schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

RECIPROCAL COMMUNICATION

An initial home visit is in place which allows parents to share information about and goals for their child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff and parents receive training on effective communication, effective parent-teacher conferencing and constructive feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal conferences and home visits include time for authentic conversation with parents:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing clear information about the child's developmental profile• Reviewing progress (home and school) toward parent-generated child development goals• Establishing a partnered approach to achieve "next steps" in child development both in the classroom and at home.			
We provide language translators to assist families as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide clear information about program policies in parent-friendly language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We exchange information daily with parents, emphasizing their child's activities, interests and strengths:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Face-to-face• Telephone• Email• Letters			
Staff members send home positive messages about children on a regular basis:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebration notes• Child initiated work with teacher comments and eliciting parent comment• Emphasizing strengths and how the parent can help			
We contact the families of children when we have developmental or socio-emotional concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers and administrators have email and/or a school website to communicate with parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents have the telephone numbers of the school, teachers and other appropriate program personnel such as bus drivers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We utilize school voice-mail to deliver educational tidbits, calendar reminders or recognition notes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We conduct an annual survey for families to provide reactions to preschool, share information and concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our school newsletter includes:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A calendar of school events• Invitations to local events or recreational gatherings• Child activity information• Curriculum and program information• Share new research on early education			

- Program mission statement
- School volunteer information
- School policy information
- Samples of child-initiated writing and artwork
- A column to address parents' questions and elicit suggestions
- Recognition of child, families, and community members

Other:

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VOLUNTEERING

We conduct individual surveys to identify interests, talents and availability of parents as volunteers.

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We offer an annual volunteer orientation training.

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We have a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings and resources for families.

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We encourage families and the community to be involved at school by:

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- Engaging with the children throughout all parts of the daily routine, especially during the 60 minutes of unstructured free choice time.
- Helping out on trips.
- Sharing a hobby, career or family tradition at large or small group time.
- Reading to individual or small groups of children.
- Engaging with children as they play outside.
- Facilitating a family-style snack or meal with children.
- Planning with parents to identify various ways to have presence in the classroom:
 - Writing letters or email to the class
 - Sharing photographs of family or work
 - Webcam visits
 - Improve school environment or equipment

We provide ways for families to be involved at home or in the community if they cannot volunteer at school.

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We recognize volunteers in multiple ways:

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We schedule parent meetings, advisory council meetings, celebrations and other events at different times of the day or evening so that all parents can attend some activities.

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Other:

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LEARNING AT HOME

We provide information to families on child development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide information to families on how to support active learning at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide information on how to embed learning experiences with their children into a daily home routine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We help parents to recognize the connection between classroom curriculum and family life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We ask parents to listen to their child "read" and to read aloud to their child daily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide calendars with daily or weekly activities for families to do at home and in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We help families understand why and how to strengthen the dispositions of initiative, persistence and reflection in their child (plan-do-review).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PARENTS AS DECISIONMAKERS

A written plan describes how the program partners with parents and is reviewed annually.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequate funding is budgeted for family engagement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annual orientation trainings are held so that parents can learn about shared decision-making, the importance of parent participation as advisory committee members and how these committees work: time commitment, typical agenda, rules of order, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide parents with an understandable process for raising issues/concerns, appealing decisions and resolving problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent representatives from each classroom are on the program advisory committee. The group is representative of enrolled families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent representatives from our program are on county-level advisory committees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of technology permits parents to participate offsite.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We develop formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives for decision-making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We involve all parents to get input on an annual review of program policies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents assist with annual program quality evaluation and goal-setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents are included as we address ways to strengthen parent involvement each year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide parents opportunities to meet with school district officials and learn about the school system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide information on local elections for school representatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

We involve parents in selecting preschool staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We involve parents in discussions about curriculum and child assessment tool selections.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We involve parents in the budget process for the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We involve parents in generating materials for distribution to families, i.e., handbook, community resource book, activity guide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

We provide a directory for parents with information on community agencies, programs and services. Translated copies are available to non-English speaking parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We work with local businesses, industries and organizations on programs to enhance opportunities for families with young children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We offer extended-day care for children, with support from community businesses, agencies or volunteers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We sponsor intergenerational connections with local senior citizen groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We provide "one-stop" shopping for family services through partnerships of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We organize service to the community by children, families and our program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We engage past-parents to assist currently enrolled families with transitioning into our program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We engage past-parents to assist currently enrolled families with transitioning out of our program and into kindergarten.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our school building is open for use by the community after hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We house a clothing exchange for enrolled families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We offer a lending library and a "toybrary" for enrolled families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TRANSITIONING TO KINDERGARTEN

We already work in a collaborative manner with other programs and the elementary school system on other initiatives, i.e., joint training, shared resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents serve on transition planning committees. There is more of parent involvement in the planning for transitions, and less of staff planning of what they think parents need for transition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents plan preschool-ending celebrations, i.e., visually create formal memories of preschool for display in the classroom and at home, create a visual record of the ending celebration in preschool, providing pictures for families to take with them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents plan kindergarten-welcoming celebrations, i.e., potluck dinner/breakfast for families with school staff and some of last year's parents, introductions of all key personnel such as bus driver, crossing guard, principal, playground staff, nurse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents are surveyed as to the information they wish to know about kindergarten.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We contact new schools to get information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We access and make recommendations on the kindergarten's welcoming tone, i.e., entry/classroom signage, appearance, security, staff interaction strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We help arrange for speakers and trips related to kindergarten, i.e., kindergarten teachers visit preschool to meet with parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We set up parent mentors or parent transition support groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We engage past-parents to assist currently enrolled families with transitioning out of our program and into kindergarten.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child information packets are planned with parents to share with the new teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted from Epstein, J., 2002, School, Family and Community Partnerships.
Michigan Department of Education – 2008 Michigan Collaborative Early Childhood Conference